

## Oakland Animal Services

### Policy on the Frequent Utilization of Community Cat Rescue Services

The purpose of this policy is to utilize a system to triage frequent requests for services related to feral or community cats. Under this policy, anyone who seeks to utilize the resources of Oakland Animal Services (OAS) five or more instances in a calendar year, for the purpose of repeated or ongoing cat rescue work must register with OAS and go through its Community Cat Coordinator or designated staff to schedule services. Such services will be provided only when OAS has adequate resources, including access to spay/neuter or other medical services, housing and care in the shelter or through the foster program, and/or relocation opportunities.

This policy differentiates an individual who finds a stray animal on a one-time or infrequent basis (less than five instances per year) from an individual who seeks to utilize the resources of OAS to further their goals for cat rescue work, including trap-neuter-return (TNR), or removal of cats from their outdoor homes for the purpose of adoption or relocation through OAS programs.

To be eligible to utilize community cat rescue services on a frequent basis, an individual must:

- Be a resident of Oakland or an approved volunteer operating on behalf of an OAS Rescue or Transfer Partner (a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that provides a significant portion of their services in Oakland and is in good standing under a current memorandum of understanding with OAS);
- Utilize the community cat service request process as established by OAS and abide by the OAS determination as to which cats can be helped and on what schedule; and
- Accept the outcome decisions made by OAS, including whether cats are returned to the place they were found, are adopted, relocated or euthanized, as determined by OAS staff to be in the cat's best interest and according to available resources.

OAS will not accept cats from any individual who is seeking to provide rescue services on a repeated or ongoing basis who does not meet the eligibility criteria above, or who fails to abide by the policies and processes established by OAS for this program.

#### Reasons for Policy:

OAS appreciates the work of individuals who are seeking to help cats in Oakland. However, OAS does not have the financial or housing resources to provide care for every community cat who needs an intervention. As such, OAS must triage its limited resources.

Outdoor cats are often "rescued" by well-intentioned civilians who are inadvertently removing them from loving families that allow them to roam freely.

There is an extreme shortage of veterinarians and veterinary technicians which has led to very limited availability of spay/neuter resources in this region. This is a statewide and national crisis that is predicted to grow far worse.

Limited spay/neuter has resulted in a growing population of outdoor cats. There are not adequate resources, through OAS or elsewhere, to stabilize this population growth nor address the needs of each cat.

*OAS Policy on the Frequent Utilization of Community Cat Rescue Services*

Since 2013, OAS has experienced a 63% increase in cat intake, with intake increasing year over year. In 2013, OAS intake for cats was 1,796, as compared to 2,857 in 2022. The lack of adequate spay/neuter resources will ensure this number continues to increase, with the number of cats coming into OAS reflecting only a small percentage of cats in the community.

OAS has very limited capacity to relocate feral cats and must reserve those resources for the most urgent situations, such as when a cat's habitat is being destroyed through development or when the cat is in immediate risk of injury or death. Relocation is not a stress- or risk-free process for the cats so will only be undertaken as a last resort.

The capacity of OAS to house and care for cats or kittens at any given time relies on its finite number of shelter cages and foster homes. OAS must preserve its extremely limited resources to ensure the ability to spay/neuter shelter animals prior to their adoption. Further, OAS must utilize a system to triage requests for services for community cats to address the most urgent needs.